

PRINCIPAL GRANT

BY

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AND

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He was the first of the native born.

PRINCIPAL GRANT

P RINCIPAL GRANT touched life at so many points and was so catholic in his interests that his biography embraces an extensive range of subjects. He was eminent alike as a churchman, as an educationist, and as a public man. In all of these spheres he was a moving force and consequently was much behind the scenes. It follows that the story of his life is an important contribution to the history of Canada since Confederation. A conspicuous instance of this is the chapter on university federation. This is the first attempt to present, even in outline, any sketch of the movement which led to this great development. Much light is thrown on university history since 1877 by the narrative of Grant's work in developing Queen's University and bringing her into close touch with the life of the country.

The Principal's relations with the various Provinces and the Government of the Dominion also receive a frank treatment which clears up many circumstances previously little known.

Fresh information is afforded with regard to confederation, to the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, to the Preferential Tariff, and to other movements in public life.

In addition, Grant's own exceptionally vivid and interesting personality is portrayed.

PAPER AND TEXT

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PORTRAIT

The portrait of Principal Grant which appears as a frontispiece to the volume is a carefully executed photogravure on heavy paper.

BINDING AND PRICE

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STUDENT LIFE AT GLASGOW

ducted upon lines strictly political; and into this party warfare Grant entered with the greatest zest, becoming one of the chief speakers of the Conservative Club, and eventually its president. Even at the West River Seminary he had been foremost in the debating society, and his readiness, coolness, and dash soon made him a prominent figure in the tussles which all old Glasgow students will remember as taking place in the Greek class-room. "He was a very Rupert in debate," says an old friend, "charging and slashing out in all directions with unaffected enthusiasm and delight," yet wary as a hawk and ever ready to deal out punishment to those who tried to presume on his assumed recklessness. On one occasion a luckless Liberal spoke unguardedly of the Conservative Association.

"There's no such thing, sir," thundered Grant, "it's a club."

"Well, what's the difference?" was the reply.

The young Nova Scotian was on his feet in an instant, his nostril curled in scorn. "There's an association, gentlemen," he said, flinging out his left hand, the fingers hanging limp and separate; "there's a club," and at the word his closed fist shot out from the shoulder, fingers clenched, the whole posture suggestive of the total difference between limp individualism and the smashing power of united effort.

But there was no malice in his sallies, and he was always a fair fighter, scorning wire-pulling and

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opposition, were his attacks on the coldness, faint-heartedness, and bigotry of the clergy, on their willingness to rest contented in vain repetitions of formulæ which had lost all relation to the real life of the community, on the worldly wisdom which masked itself as piety. Preaching in 1866 to the assembled synod, he says :—

"Ministers the especial agents in this work of the regeneration of men, did I say ! Surely I am wrong—that is not their part in the present day. The minister's duty now is to give no offence to saint or sinner ; to tread delicately lest he offend delicate sensibilities ; to make much of the people, and by indirect flattery make them think well of themselves that they may think well of him ; to be, in a word, an amiable, harmless creature, a dignified and respected wind-bag, from which shall proceed at regulation intervals sounds that shall be accepted as thunder, thunder without lightning, thunder warranted to hurt nobody. The minister's work now is to crush his manhood out of him ; to have no opinions which differ from those entertained by any one he meets, and to have no opinions at all on matters of real life ; to strike at the vices of the absent, of other classes, other times ; to echo the cuckoo note of a barren orthodoxy, to strain at the gnats of heresy, and to be suspicious of scientific criticism and free thought. No, in the name of the living God, a thousand times no. Ministers are—ought to be—'labourers together with God,' stew-

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one could call it Jesuitical, and I know that it is not considered satisfactory by his enemies, and that they will still fight to try and extrude him. We have to meet a packed Assembly, but we shall do our best. James, it may fairly be argued, has already been frank enough, or too frank for a court, and he is not required to put weapons into the hands of his enemies to be used against him, enemies who have shown themselves incapable of appreciating trust and generous frankness."

So bitter was the feeling that a large minority, of whom Grant was one, would probably have broken up the newly-formed union rather than sacrifice Macdonnell, and with him liberty of thought and speech.¹ A compromise was finally arranged, and the following statement, drawn up by a committee, of which the convener was the Rev. Dr. Jenkins, minister of St. Paul's, Montreal, was signed by Macdonnell, and unanimously accepted as satisfactory by the Assembly :—

"That Mr. Macdonnell, in intimating in his last statement to the General Assembly his adherence

¹ "At the Toronto Assembly in 1876," writes an eye-witness, "the friends of Mr. Macdonnell met at the close of the sederunt. After a general discussion, Grant said: 'If they are determined to push the matter in this spirit, let us demand that they repose us, and let us have peace and liberty.' Professor MacKerras at once stood up and with great earnestness said: 'No, that will never do; we must maintain our union at all hazards.' The majority of us intimated fervent agreement with MacKerras, and I never heard a second proposal of separation."

THE ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN

prepared each visit with minute care. "The arrangements about my meetings," he wrote to his wife, "cause me an infinite amount of bother. To-day I had to write ten letters." His difficult tour through western Ontario began by his arriving in London on a Friday, "to find that no arrangements had been made for my meeting Monday evening on account of the absence of the ministers, and their stupidity, and I have been at work till now, seeing the papers and doing all I could."

Late in the campaign, when his great strength had been overtaxed, and when every letter home told of intense suffering, he spoke still more explicitly. After speaking of pain "which sickened me so that I thought it was inflammation of the bowels and death," he wrote: "The fact is, I must do the work I am at. No one else can. They only spoil places; *e.g.*, poor Mr. — only made one hundred and seventy-three dollars last week in the presbytery of Kingston with incredible toil. And in Montreal last week I divided the people to be called on into two lists, giving one to the best man I could find and taking the other myself. In the three days he got three hundred dollars, and I got five thousand five hundred. What will you do with such facts?"

The physical toil was increased by the need for constant wariness. The union was new, and old animosities had not been forgotten. Queen's, for many reasons, partly because of her connection

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St. Lawrence valley, or the Ottawa valley. The university investments in Cobourg amounted to only thirty thousand dollars.

Grant's programme was clear. He was seeking to induce the Presbyterian Church as a whole to take the interest in Queen's which the Old Kirk wing had always felt. He was cultivating in the whole of eastern Ontario the sense that Queen's was a local and territorial institution, which was strong in Kingston and the county of Frontenac. It was his intention that when the government of the province made up its mind to assist higher education by promoting scientific studies, recognition must be extended to the work carried on at Kingston, and aid given to some type of school of science which would supplement the work of Queen's College. To Chancellor Nelles the future was more dubious. The connexionism of his university was complete, for the Methodist Church kept Victoria under its direct control, and the union of Methodism in 1883 had been followed by the merging into Victoria of Albert University, which the Methodist Episcopal Church had maintained at Belleville. Territorialization was impossible in Cobourg, and Nelles was in a greater hurry for state aid than Grant was. He revolved various projects. There were negotiations to move the university to Peterborough, or to Hamilton. At one time he talked of taking Victoria to Kingston and effecting a close alliance with Queen's. Again he thought of an

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the establishment of a group of arts colleges sharing in common a faculty devoted to the more expensive scientific studies. The idea took firm hold of Chancellor Nelles's mind. It seems to have occurred about the same time to Professor Mac-Vicar, of the Toronto Baptist College, an active and vigorous institution which soon afterwards developed into McMaster University. It may have come originally from Mr. Goldwin Smith. At all events Nelles seized upon it, and constituted himself its special advocate.

Dr. Nelles was an ardent man, of quick, sanguine, and perhaps hasty apprehension, of great enthusiasm, and apparently fond of canvassing and influencing others. He threw himself into the work, negotiated with Mr. Mulock, corresponded with the Hon. George W. Ross, the newly-appointed minister of education, canvassed the Trinity authorities, consulted Grant, and strove to influence his own denomination. Apparently as a result of his activity, Mr. Ross, in July, 1884, summoned a private conference of representatives of the universities and theological colleges of the province. The conference met on July 24th, adjourned till September, and met repeatedly until, on January 8th, 1885, the federation scheme was completed.

To Grant this turn of affairs must have been highly unwelcome. Every scheme of university reorganization broached at this period involved the idea of concentration at Toronto, the one thing

CHAPTER XIX

CANADIAN POLITICS

GRANT insisted on the right to be a publicist as well as a churchman; few things roused him to hotter resentment than the theory that clergymen should take no part in public affairs. He was the despair, however, of party men. "Grant a politician? Heaven forbid!" exclaimed an old friend, whose service to one particular organization was life-long in its faithfulness. "He had no continuity of policy; heaven only knows where he would have led a party!" His detachment from party, as well as from partisan considerations, was absolute. No other considerable public man in Canada has followed fixed principles with more complete indifference to their effect upon the fortunes of existing organizations. To men associated with the daily incidents of political management, his cool readiness to abandon the party which had ceased to further his fundamental principles, was deeply puzzling. Had he been a professed "independent" this would have been expected. But the baffling thing was that Grant, with his intense desire to effect things, instead of adopting the attitude of judicial balance usual in the independent, made himself a powerful ally of the side which he judged

CANADIAN POLITICS

1898, when the Dominion plebiscite on the subject was taken, the prohibitionist campaigning was marked by an uneasy arrogance. The leaders were active, the organization was excellent, the only doubt was whether the movement could command an effective rank and file.

All through his life Grant's attitude towards this question was consistent. He always upheld temperance, and he always opposed steps to impose abstinence by external compulsion. Some of his most effective work in his Halifax pastorate had been in inducing victims of drink to become total abstainers. He disagreed with the great body of active temperance workers on two main issues. He would not admit that the drink evil possessed the relative importance which they attributed to it. Lack of faith, lack of courage, lack of reverence, to him were the root sins, were the cause; intoxication and other overt sins were symptoms. Even among the grosser sins he ranked the excessive use of liquor as inferior in destructive power to at least one other evil. He placed a higher value on purity of life than on abstention from liquor. "Not drink but dirt is the greatest evil in Canada to-day." In 1898 he told the General Assembly that political corruption was a greater injury to Canada than drunkenness. Further, he disbelieved absolutely in the efficacy as well as in the righteousness of attempts to compel men to be sober. Apart from the ethical questions involved in such short-cuts to

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During the next few years the imperial idea made rapid progress. In 1896 the Liberals came into power, and in the following year the most important of the tariff proposals of the minister of finance¹ was a preference to goods manufactured in Britain of twenty-five per cent., subsequently increased to thirty-three per cent. Of each successive increase Grant was a strong advocate, and his disgust at the opposition of the Conservative party threw him more and more into sympathy with the Liberals. In 1898 a preference was given to West Indian sugar. For this measure of relief to the oldest and the most unfortunate of Britain's colonies, Grant was largely responsible.

To Colonel G. T. Denison, January 3rd, 1898, (private and confidential).—"A happy New Year to you! I have just returned from Ottawa. Had an hour with Fielding discussing the West India question, which he understands thoroughly. I think that something will be done, though perhaps not all we might wish at first.

"Had an hour also with Laurier. First, the preference hereafter is to be confined to Britain. That is settled, but this is, of course, strictly confidential.

"Secondly, he seemed at first to think that we had gone far enough with our twenty-five per cent. reduction, till we could see its workings, but when I argued for going on steadily along that line, he

¹ The Hon. W. S. Fielding.

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"2. Should a third contingent be called for, we have neither the officers nor the horses needed for it. To prepare for this, and at the same time do what a year ago was deemed wise by the minister of militia in our own interests, we should at once organize the regiment of Mounted Rifles in the North-West recommended in General Hutton's report as submitted to parliament. That is the kind of force needed in the Transvaal, but drill for some weeks or even months would be indispensable to efficiency.

"8. We should at once offer the imperial government to garrison Halifax and Jamaica, and so enable them to withdraw for active service the only two white battalions they have on our continent and islands. The case of Halifax is clear. But, why trouble ourselves about the West Indies, it may be asked? In all imperial matters, so far as North America is concerned, the voice of Canada should be potent, or even decisive.

"The government has already taken this position and it has been practically conceded by the actual constitution of the present high commission. Action in accordance with this is called for now. The action hinted at would do us good in many ways, would be popular with the militia, and in line with what Britain is doing.

"In mentioning the above three points I have had in view a policy that would show due liberality to our boys, forethought and initiative. That a dis-